JFK Grave Site Sealed Off to Prepare for

■ **Services:** Family's wish for privacy is heeded with military efficiency. Arlington National Cemetery bars public access as resting place is readied.

By EDWIN CHEN
TIMES STAFF WRITER

ARLINGTON, Va.—For all these years, she pursued an utterly private life. But Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis chose to be laid to rest at one of America's most hallowed tourist attractions: the hauntingly serene Arlington National Cemetery.

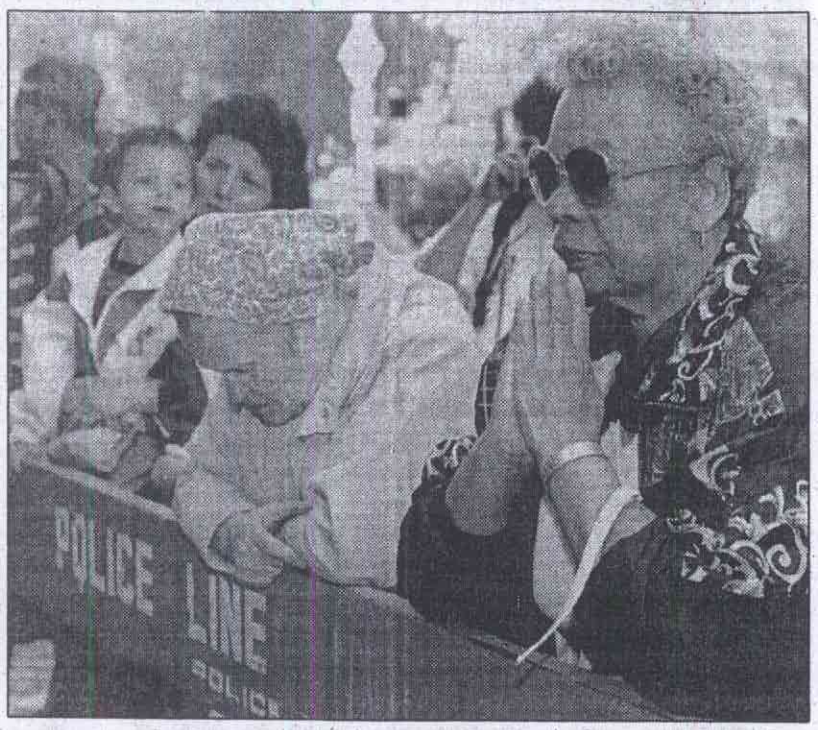
On Monday, in a private ceremony, the former First Lady will be buried alongside her first husband, President John F. Kennedy, among the 612 acres of green knolls that overlook the capital and serve as the final resting place for more than 225,000 U.S. servicemen and women and their loved ones.

"It seems appropriate and somehow right that she and Jack will be together again," Jeanette Freeman of Lumberton, N.C., said during a visit to the cemetery Saturday. "That's just where she should be."

On a crystalline spring morning, Americans by the thousands streamed into the cemetery, intent on stopping by the grave site. However, they found access closed off, allowing unseen workers to ready the ground where Cape Cod stones frame an eternal flame at Kennedy's resting place.

Military police blocked access to all paths leading to the grave, which sits on a hillside overlooking the Lincoln Memorial just across the Potomac River.

News photographers were barred from taking pictures Saturday, even from a distance. At one point, three photographers were threatened with arrest if they did not leave. Even tourists were told not to point cameras in the direction of the grave site.



Associated Press

Prayers are said at barrier outside apartment of Jacqueline Onassis.

"We're preparing the grave site, and the family wanted that to be done in private," said Adrien Creecy, a spokeswoman for the cemetery. The entire cemetery will be closed for the burial.

In the cemetery's teeming visitors center, many paused to contemplate a giant, wall-mounted photograph taken during the 1963 graveside services for Kennedy. In the foreground was his 34-year-old widow, her stoic countenance behind a black veil.

"I was a high school freshman then. But it's still very sentimental for me," Freeman said, her eyes riveted on the photograph. "Life forced her to be so much more public than she wanted to be. But she did it so well."

"She was such a nice person,"

Onassis Burial

added an elderly woman who sat on a wooden bench nearby. "It's so sad.

"Jackie personified womanhood," said the woman, who is from St. Louis but did not wish to give her name. "All the young girls wanted to take after her—in their dress and in their manners. But after he [Kennedy] died, the kids fell apart."

President Clinton, who is scheduled to speak at the burial service, also paid tribute to Mrs. Onassis in his weekly Saturday radio address.

"She inspired all of us with her grace and courage. She loved art and culture—all the things that express the better angels of our nature. She and President Kennedy made people believe that change for the better is possible, that public service is a noble calling, and that we ought to be about the business of building our country up, not tearing it down or pulling it apart," Clinton said.

"This is a time of considerably more cynicism and pessimism, when harsh rhetoric of division and distraction and outright destruction sometimes dominates discussion of public issues. But it is well today to remember the examples of President and Mrs. Kennedy. They changed our lives for the better

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because they helped us to believe we could change for the better. That is still true. It is ultimately pointless and self-defeating to believe any other way."

Also on Saturday, mourners in New York continued to stop by Mrs. Onassis' 5th Avenue apartment building, congregating behind police barricades as family and friends arrived for a private wake.

Her granddaughters—5-year-old Rose and 4-year-old Tatiana—arrived outside her apartment house in matching red coats.

Mrs. Onassis' daughter Caroline and her husband, Edwin Schlossberg, brought the girls inside the building and past a media horde.

"She was a great woman. For me, I will always remember her as a graceful, beautiful woman," Lisa Muica said as she wiped away tears and laid a bouquet of white roses at the door of the luxury building.

Mrs. Onassis, who became America's youngest-ever First Lady at age 31, died Thursday night at age 64 after a short battle against a virulent form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer of the lymph system.

A private funeral Mass is scheduled for 10 a.m. Monday at St. Ignatius Loyola Roman Catholic Church on Park Avenue. Afterward, her body is expected to be flown aboard a chartered plane to Washington.

Burial will follow at Arlington. Mrs. Onassis will be laid to rest next to Kennedy and their two children who died in infancy: Patrick, who died three days after birth in August, 1963; and a daughter who was stillborn in 1956.

The White House said Saturday that First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton will attend the funeral service in New York "as a friend of the family" and that the President will speak at the burial.

Hillary Clinton will fly with the Kennedy family aboard the jet carrying Mrs. Onassis' coffin to Washington and the President will be at National Airport to meet the entourage, a spokeswoman said.

Times wire services contributed to this story.